NOTE II.

ON A PECULIARLY COLORED STOAT IN THE COLLECTIONS OF THE LEYDEN MUSEUM

BY

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The Stoat, *Putorius erminea* (Linné), has a differently colored summer- and winter-dress: its lower parts, margins of the ears and feet, however, constantly are of a whitish or yellowish white color and the terminal part of its tail remains black in all seasons. In winter in our temperate climate its coat sometimes is mottled with brown, but in severe winters it becomes entirely white: the more farther north the white is purer: in southern Europe and Asia it is brown the whole year all round.

In our collection [1]) is a rather complete series of individuals procured in different months, all from the environs of Leyden: this series shows very clearly the way by which the stoat turns white in winter and again brown in summer.

In the autumn distinct parts of the dark summer-coat successively become white, apparently sudden and in the following order as a rule — a rule however with many exceptions: the tail beginning at the distal part of the brown, the flanks of the body, the haunches and shoulders, the legs, the upperparts of body, finally the head, beginning between the eyes, so that according to the more or less severe winter-cold the animal has turned white in December or January. In spring just the reverse phenomenon can be studied; in February or March the white garb is substituted by the brown summer-dress, beginning with a coloring of the head a. s. o. and ending with the white part of the tail where the black of that organ stops. As this coloring and discoloring is always very symmetrical it is evident that there must occur phases of special beauty. Now there is in our Museum a specimen so wonderfully striped and lined and moreover this so exceedingly symmetrical, that if we did not know its origin, one should be seduced to describe it as a distinct species. It has been captured on April 15th 1869 in Holland and presented to the Museum by the Institution St. Vincentius à Paulo. It is a not full-grown specimen, apparently born the foregoing spring.

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[1]) Cf. Catalogue systématique des Mammifères du Muséum d'Histoire naturelle des Pays-Bas. 1892. Tome XI, p. 144.

The brown color of the upperparts and sides is locally interrupted by rather small stripes or bands of white colored hairs, which are longer than the other ones, representing the last rest of the elongated hairs of the white winter-dress. From a rather large spot of white hairs on the nape of the neck run two white bands along the upperparts of each flank ending under the base of the tail; on each side on the shoulderblades are two white lines beginning at the same point of the white line just described, the anterior one ending on the breast, the other one describes a curve and ends on the upperpart of the foreleg; on the haunches there is on each side a more or less defined circle, joining to the white side stripe, describing a curve and ending at the root of the tail: hands and feet white; a white ring separates the brown colored tail from the black terminal part of that organ.